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Budget passes first Knesset reading

EVELYN GORDON



Finance Minister Dan Meridor listens to the Knesset debate yesterday.

THE 1997 budget passed its first reading after tense hours of negotiations within the coalition, but at the price of a publicly humiliated finance minister and the threat of a challenge to the vote in the High Court of Justice.

The 59-52 vote, with five abstentions, was made possible after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu gave a letter to Geshet promising to "act with a willingness to make changes in [six] budgetary line items, while preserving the framework of the budget [both]."

Both Netanyahu and Finance Minister Dan Meridor insisted that the letter was not a cave-in, but merely a repetition of what both had been saying for months.

"There is nothing in this letter which is in any way different from what I have been saying for months," Netanyahu said. "I am willing to make changes. I am willing, and in fact want to advance social welfare issues. But I refuse to exceed the budgetary framework."

"When I read this letter, I see great similarity, and even identity with what I have been saying for three months," Meridor added. "I am very happy that we passed the budget without giving a single faction a commitment to make any specific change or for a specific sum."

whether he still has "full faith" in Netanyahu.

Opposition MKs said the incident left Meridor with no choice but to resign.

"After what happened, when [Eitan] announced that there is an agreement and Meridor said there is no agreement... he simply has nothing to do in that job anymore," MK Avraham Shohat (Labor) said.

"The deal cut behind the finance minister's back is the guillotine which Benjamin Netanyahu prepared for Dan Meridor's head," Meretz leader Yossi Sarid said.

"The prime minister left his finance minister no choice except to resign. Dan Meridor is an honest man, and this government is not fit company for him."

Even before this final humili-

ation, however, the vote provided plenty of grist for the opposition's mill. When Meridor ascended the podium at about 2:30 p.m. to give his final speech before the vote, it quickly became obvious that he was filibustering to give Netanyahu time to try to muster a majority.

Geshet's five MKs, including Foreign Minister David Levy, were still threatening to vote against the budget, and Yisrael Ba'aliya had decided to abstain. By the end of the first hour, Meridor could barely be heard over the opposition's jibing suggestions that he give up and postpone the vote.

When Eitan finally announced the agreement with Geshet, however, pandemonium erupted from the opposition benches. The opposition charged that by law any agreement

made by the government to enable it to survive a crucial vote must be submitted to the Knesset 48 hours before the vote, and the letter, they said, constitutes such an agreement.

Knesset legal adviser Zvi Inbar rejected this argument, saying the law specifies a closed list of cases in which this 48-hour clause applies, and the budget vote is not one of them. However, MK Moshe Shahal (Labor) and MK Dedi Zucker (Meretz) plan to petition the High Court against this ruling.

As of Tuesday night, the government had still been hoping to cut a deal with Yisrael Ba'aliya, which was demanding research grants for immigrant scientists and the building of hostels for physically and mentally handicapped immigrants.

This would have given the coalition 61 votes no matter what Geshet did.

Avigdor Lieberman, director-general of the Prime Minister's Office, even reached a deal with party leader Natan Sharansky early yesterday morning, according to which NIS 55 million would be added to the budget for these projects. However, Meridor refused to approve it, saying he objected to making a specific commitment to any party.

Yisrael Ba'aliya then decided that though its two ministers would vote for the budget, its five other MKs would abstain in protest, as Meridor's vague promise to consider its requests favorably was insufficient.

This left the government no

choice but to deal with Geshet. By yesterday morning, Geshet had moderated his demands, and instead of insisting on immediate changes, was willing to settle for a letter such as it finally received. However, it insisted on the words "a willingness to make changes" being in the letter, and Netanyahu, who had wanted to substitute the phrase "a willingness to look into changes," was forced to give in as the hours passed.

In a face-saving gesture suggested by Shas leader Aryeh Deri, however, the final letter was addressed to both Geshet and Shas to make it appear that the government had not just given in to Geshet.

The six budget items listed in the letter are increasing payments for doctors' visits, cuts in child allowances, postponement of the long school day, cuts in the Demobilized Soldiers Law, reducing investment grants and cuts in financial benefits to senior citizens.

Moledet, which has so far been abstaining on all crucial votes, decided to vote with the opposition. Party leader Rehavam Ze'evi explained that he considers this an "evil government" which must be toppled and while he cannot vote for a no-confidence motion blaming the government for not moving fast enough on the peace process, voting against the budget provides no such problem.

Having made it through the first reading, however, the government now faces a much greater hurdle. Virtually every faction in the coalition, including the Likud itself, has said it will not support the budget in final reading if major changes are not made in the six clauses listed by Geshet. In addition, most of the parties have other financial demands relating to their own special interests.

"It won't be easy, because the various factions' demands come to hundreds of millions of shekels," Meridor said, adding that most of them also are included in the government's coalition agreements. "But no faction is asking for everything it wants in the first year... I hope we will reach an agreement with all the coalition members."

Coalition anger, Page 2

Regular security consultations to be held with Russia

DAVID MAKOVSKY

REGULAR strategic consultations will be held with Russia's security and diplomatic establishments to discuss such issues as terror and Islamic militancy.

Ambassador to Russia Aliza Shenhar told reporters here on the eve of today's visit by Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov.

Primakov has already held talks in Syria, Lebanon and Egypt.

Russia is "willing, like us, to institutionalize a regular dialogue with us on issues such as terror and radical Islam," Shenhar said.

She said a preliminary dialogue has begun between diplomats, but now it will both be regularized and expanded to "include the entire establishment in both countries."

Security sources, however, suggested that Russia has not yet formalized agreement to such a dialogue.

Shenhar said that Moscow, which was an official cosponsor of the 1991 Madrid peace conference, is also seeking a more active role in the peace process. However, both Foreign Ministry Director-General Eitan Bentsur and Shenhar indicated they wanted this role to deal with reviving the largely moribund multilateral talks on regional cooperation, designed to supplement the sensitive bilateral peace talks on peace, security and land.

"We very much value the multilaterals, and we think that Russia could have a key role in advancing those issues," Bentsur said. "The foreign minister expects to raise this issue with his Russian counterpart."

Bentsur and Shenhar sought to soften the image of Primakov, who is largely perceived as an Arabist. They both said that Israel deeply values his knowledge of Middle East affairs and his connections with Arab leaders.

Shenhar said that Moscow is interested not only in selling arms to the region, but in increasing its economic profile. She said that, like France, Russia has dispatched oil and trade teams to Baghdad so it will be ready when UN sanctions against Iraq are lifted and business can commence.

When asked if the sale of a Russian nuclear reactor to Iran would be raised with Primakov, Foreign Ministry officials suggested that it is better the US explore this with Russia. Shenhar noted that Iranian students are coming to Moscow to obtain a better handle on Russian nuclear technology.

After Primakov meets with Foreign Minister David Levy this morning, the two will sign an agreement on establishing cultural centers in each other's country. Moreover, Levy is expected to symbolically hand Primakov the registration of Russian properties in downtown Jerusalem, thereby closing an issue which has been an irritant in the bilateral relationship.

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russia made an agreement that it would assume all liabilities and assets of the former regime. Therefore, Moscow was upset that Israel engaged in the cumbersome procedure, which took years, of asking all former members of the Soviet Union if they had objections to the registration transfer.

Earlier this year, it was decided to transfer the registration. The properties are a parking lot on King George Street, which Russia reportedly wants to turn into an office building; the court complex in the Russian Compound; and the adjoining Holy Trinity Cathedral.

Another irritant to the relationship was removed a few weeks ago when Russia renewed the registration of the Jewish Agency in Moscow, which had been revoked during the Russian election campaign earlier this year. The US intervened on Israel's behalf in this issue.

Primakov will also meet with Industry and Trade Minister Natan Sharansky. The meeting was scheduled at Russia's request. The Russian authorities have invited Sharansky to visit Russia at the end of next month, the first time he will be visiting since emerging from a prison there in early 1986.

Tomorrow, Primakov is scheduled to visit Gaza before leaving.

PM, Meridor both lose in budget tug-of-war

COMMENT SARAH HONG

FINANCE Minister Dan Meridor was not the only victim in the budget battle yesterday - as opposition spokesmen were quick to claim. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu continued to be the rope in a ruthless tug-of-war between Meridor and the other ministers, led by Foreign Minister David Levy, with the help of Shas leader Aryeh Deri.

By last night it appeared that Levy and Co. had overwhelmed Meridor and tugged Netanyahu harder, pulling him to their side, for the time being, at least. Such merciless handling of a prime minister at the time budgets are being concocted and squeezed through the Knesset are, of course, nothing new. This is an annual rite, in which sectarian pressures come to play, pulling the hapless prime minister in different directions and forcing him to give way lest his government be torn apart.

Neither was there anything new - pundits were quick to point out - in the fact that Meridor seems to have been on the receiving end and that Levy appeared to have come out on top. Ever since the Netanyahu government was formed, Meridor has not appeared to be doing well, beginning with the humiliating manner in which he won his office in the first place. Opposition leaders were not the only ones to have asserted that what we are witnessing is a settling of scores by Netanyahu for Meridor's near challenge to Netanyahu's nomination on the eve of the last elections, when Netanyahu appeared down and out.

However, if Netanyahu was bent on settling scores then the one he should have concentrated on most was Levy. But the fact is that what took place yesterday had nothing to do with the settling of old political (Continued on Page 9)

US worried about sale of Israeli technology to China

DAVID MAKOVSKY

THE US is concerned about Israeli technology being sold to China, for fear this could upset the regional balance in Asia, according to sources close to the Pentagon, whose information was confirmed in Jerusalem.

The concern is about Israeli technology and thereby differs from the past, when the US charged that Israel was pirating US technology and sending it to China. US concern has apparently increased this year, as China staged five-missile exercises in the Taiwan Strait and the US responded by sending aircraft carriers to patrol the sea lane.

Following Defense Minister William Perry's recent meeting with Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai in Washington, their final communiqué mentioned that the two had "discussed ways to achieve better policy coordination on issues related to the transfer of equipment and technology in third countries."

An official in the Prime Minister's Office suggested that Israel is likely to be more circumspect before selling any more high-technology to China, but refused to discuss specifics, such as indications that Israel is currently negotiating with the Chinese over the sale of an airborne early-warning system.

"Most of Israel's security relations with China were built during the Cold War, when the US was actively involved in strategic cooperation with China as a counterweight to the Soviet Union," he said. "There is a growing awareness in Israel that China is identified as a potential American military rival in the future, which requires a reassessment of Israeli policy."

Bill to invalidate Reform and Conservative conversions here due soon

HAIM SHAPIRO

A BILL designed to invalidate Reform and Conservative conversions performed in Israel is to be submitted to the Knesset within two weeks, following an agreement late Tuesday night between representatives of the religious parties and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, a spokesman for the National Religious Party said yesterday.

The spokesman, Yehoshua Mor-Yosef, said that the proposed law intends to deal with conversions performed in Israel. Spokesmen for the Reform Movement, however, have expressed fear that the law would also relate to conversions performed outside of Israel.

According to the Law of Return, which defines the right of all Jews to come to Israel, a Jew is anyone born of a Jewish mother or anyone who was converted to Judaism. The High Court of Justice has declared valid any conversion carried out by a Jewish community abroad, non-Orthodox as well as Orthodox. Repeated efforts to amend the Law of Return to state that conversion refers only to conversion according to Halacha have generated vehement protests from Diaspora Jewry, especially the American Jewish community.

Last year, for the first time, the court ruled that a Reform conversion performed in Israel could not be declared invalid for civil purposes, although the court did not order the Interior Ministry to register the convert as Jewish in the population registry. According to Mor-Yosef, there are now 15 cases of local Reform conversions before the High Court.

Anat Bender, an attorney for the Reform Movement's Israel Religious Action Center, said that the proposed law could be used to prevent Reform and Conservative converts from immigrating to Israel.

"The proposed law, as stated, does not distinguish between conversion abroad and that in Israel. A Jewish Agency official could tell a convert abroad that he would have to have his conversion approved by the [Israeli] Chief Rabbinate," Bender said.

Mor-Yosef said that the proposed law now has the support of all the parties in the coalition, including Yisrael Ba'aliya, which, he noted, has a vested interest in the issue.

Yisrael Ba'aliya spokesman Moti Inbari said yesterday that apparently the party would agree to the passage of the law, although this had not been formally approved by the party's institutions. According to Inbari, there are about 150,000 immigrants from the former Soviet Union who are not halachically Jewish.

Rabbi Richard Hirsch, executive director of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, said it is outrageous that the government should come to such a decision this week, when the Jewish Agency Board of

El Al predicts \$100m. loss this year

HAIM SHAPIRO

EL AL Managing-Director Yoel Feldschuh said last night that he expects the company to end the year with a loss of about \$100 million.

Speaking to reporters at Ben-Gurion Airport upon completing one month in his post, Feldschuh said the main reason for the loss is the drop in tourism. Other factors include the government's open-skies policy, which allows almost completely unregulated competition.

Israel was second only to the US in opening itself up to competition from airlines around the world, he said.

He said that unbridled competition among airlines is a problem worldwide and that the International Air Transport Association is due to hold an emergency meeting in November on the issue of ticket-price competition.

"The open-skies policy, he said, was meant to increase tourism, but it has been shown that incoming tourism is far more affected by the geopolitical situation than by prices.

He also cited the strong shekel and rising fuel prices as factors.

Feldschuh said that under the present circumstances it would be difficult for the airline to be sold.

"I don't see how privatization can take place at this time," he said.

Feldschuh described El Al's service as "not bad," but added that it had to become much better. He stressed, however, that the airline had placed relatively well with regard to service in independent surveys.

Is Hebron Redeployment possible?

Ask Israelis and Palestinians who LIVE there. Journalists, embassy personnel and academics are invited to a one-day briefing in Hebron, leaving the American Colony Hotel at 9:30 a.m. Sunday, November 3. Meetings scheduled with prominent Arab and Jewish residents of Hebron.

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Netanyahu welcomes Shara's remarks

LIAT COLLINS and news agencies

PRIME Minister Benjamin Netanyahu yesterday welcomed Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Shara's declaration that his country is not intending to launch an attack on Israel.

Speaking at a meeting with 20 European ambassadors, he called it an important declaration, and repeated that Israel has no hostile intentions toward Syria.

Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai, meanwhile, repeated a call on the Syrians to resume talks. Answering a motion to the Knesset agenda on the situation in Lebanon, raised by Ephraim Sneh (Labor), Mordechai said: "All we want is to sign a sustainable agreement and bring security to the North. We have no argument with Lebanon over borders."

He said, however, that terror groups and the Syrians are exploiting Lebanese land for their own interests. "There is no doubt that Syria is playing a full and central role in this drama," Mordechai said.

He rejected attempts at linking recent attacks on IDF soldiers in the security zone with the current government's policy, noting they had also occurred under the previous government.

He said Israel should not be forced "to give up strategic inter-

ests." An official Syrian newspaper yesterday accused Netanyahu of preparing for war and said any attack would "not be a mere picnic."

Tishreen said military exercises in the Golan Heights, were "part of Israel's declared war against the peace process. They are conducted at the orders of Netanyahu. It is clear that the direct objectives of the Israeli military games are to provoke Syria, heighten tension, and prepare for a possible aggression." But in Washington, a State Department spokesman said on Tuesday that the US saw no cause for concern over the recent Syrian troop movements which caused anxiety in Israel.

Tishreen said Arabs and the world understand the policies of Netanyahu and would "hold him responsible for any reckless adventure that he might make. They will not stand with hands folded against such an action."

"It is better for Israel's leaders to return in the peace process and abandon the policy of occupation, settlements, expansion, and aggression and to commit themselves to the world community's will because all have interest in peace."

Coalition fuming at Geshet for stealing the show

EVELYN GORDON

GESHET'S grandstanding aroused a good deal of bitterness in the coalition, despite - or perhaps because of - the fact that almost every coalition MK agreed with its demands.

Most coalition MKs have said repeatedly that they will not support the budget in final reading if it does not include many of the changes Geshet is demanding.

For the sake of the coalition's image, however, they agreed to postpone these issues until after the first reading.

Now, Geshet has not only made their sacrifice useless by embarrassing the government single-handedly, but at the same time it has snatched all the glory of being the defenders of the poor.

"This only weakens the coalition and weakens the government," said Silvan Shalom (Likud), who heads the coalition in the Knesset Finance Committee.

"If these issues aren't resolved by the second and third readings, I'll have trouble voting for the budget. But I think the struggle should be deferred until after the first reading."

Finance Committee chairman Avraham Ravitz (United Torah Judaism) said he found Geshet's stand especially unjustified in light of the fact that they had twice stood up Finance Minister Dan Meridor after he agreed to meet with them about their demands.

"Now they are coming [with

threats] at the last minute, in order to impress their voters. You do not operate that way! It's uncollegial and irresponsible," he said.

Pini Badash (Tsimet) said the timing was especially poor because the government cannot afford to look weak when it is in the middle of sensitive negotiations with the Palestinians.

"Even if they are right in what they are demanding, this isn't the time," Badash said. "It's important that the government look strong right now."

Even some of those who had supported Geshet's stand initially were infuriated by their success.

When asked yesterday morning about Geshet's intention to vote against the budget, for instance, Shaul Yahalom (National Religious Party) said: "I think they're right. If the NRP had accepted my opinion, we would also vote against."

When coalition chairman Michael Eitan (Likud) announced the agreement with Geshet to the plenum, however, Yahalom exploded. "It is not possible to run a coalition when agreements are made with part of the coalition without including the entire coalition," he said. "The NRP will not agree to this approach."

But the consensus seems to be that however much the other coalition members may dislike Geshet's behavior, the faction is still needed, so they will have to put up with it.



US Consul in Jerusalem Edward Abington (second from left) pays a condolence call on the family of Hinni Shoushi, 11, who allegedly was beaten to death by the security officer of the Hadar Betar settlement. Abington said he came to the village of Husan to show the US government is committed to the peace process, but also because he was personally touched by the boy's death. (AP)

Swiss envoy in US: Efforts to return Holocaust-era assets being 'sniped at'

MARILYN HENRY WASHINGTON

ALTHOUGH the Swiss mishandled some matters regarding Holocaust-era assets, the Swiss are disturbed by the "sniping" about its efforts, saying these have been tarnished by distortions, the Swiss ambassador to the US said yesterday.

"Accusations should not be made before records have been carefully analyzed, and sinister motives should not be attributed to measures taken out of genuine concern," Ambassador Carlo Jagmetti said, at a press conference in Washington.

Jagmetti acknowledged, however, that "from a human point of view, some real mistakes have been made" when the heirs approached the Swiss banks after the war.

"Psychological errors were made," Jagmetti said at the Swiss

Embassy. "It was unacceptable [for the banks] to ask for death certificates."

The Swiss banks are now facing two class-action lawsuits, filed in New York, to identify Holocaust era assets. One of the suits seeks a \$20 billion settlement, which Jagmetti called "pure fantasy."

"These figures are really speculative, but we leave it to the judge," he said.

He repeatedly rejected the charges, brought by the heirs of bank depositors and the Senate Banking Committee, that the Swiss are delaying their inquiry into the fate of Holocaust-era assets. That investigation has

become known as the "five-year" inquiry, because the legislation that authorizes it lifts bank secrecy for a period of five years.

"This is an act of good faith, recognizing the need for thoroughness, was tarnished by sniping remarks and the stroke of a pen as mere delaying tactics," Jagmetti said.

In addition to the broad inquiry, the Swiss Foreign Ministry announced on Tuesday that historians will report in December on post-war compensation pacts between Switzerland and former communist regimes.

Privately, Swiss officials expressed concern that the un-

endeavor could backfire. They suggested that the broad Swiss inquiry, which so far has wide public support, might be forced into a referendum before it could begin.

Much of the harsh criticism has come from Swiss Banking Chairman Alfonso D'Amato, who has accused the Swiss of stonewalling and conspiracy. He has also called on the US government to reconsider its post-war agreements with Switzerland, saying that Switzerland failed to fully identify the Nazi assets in Switzerland at the time.

Coping with the past in not an easy experience, Jagmetti said.

"The least that a country undergoing this process can expect is to be entitled to fair treatment. The aftermath of 1939-45 has, in this respect, not spared anyone on either side of the Atlantic."

Matza tipped to receive health portfolio

SARAH HONIG

A NEW minister - Likud MK Yehoshua Matza - will be joining the government next week, according to Likud sources. Matza will receive the Health portfolio from Tzahi Hanegbi, who will take full charge of the Justice portfolio.

Thus far Hanegbi had been caretaker justice minister in addition to retaining the health portfolio, which he had received originally. Hanegbi had been given temporary charge of the justice portfolio following Ya'acov Ne'eman's resignation when the attorney-general announced he would open an obstruction of justice investigation against Ne'eman in connection with the Deri case.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu wanted Ne'eman to return to his post and had therefore appointed Hanegbi as acting justice minister

only. However, the law does not allow any portfolio to remain with a caretaker for more than three months.

The three months in question are up next week and Ne'eman's troubles are unlikely to be resolved in time. This leaves Netanyahu no choice but to appoint a new justice minister. Although Hanegbi said he finds it hard to choose between the portfolios and is glad that the choice is not his to make, it is understood that he prefers the justice portfolio. Hanegbi is a lawyer by training and the Health Ministry is considered one of the most troublesome and thankless tasks in the government.

Matza had been promised a portfolio by Netanyahu before his victory last May and the only reason he was kept out of the government thus far was the fact that the small parties had made such gains that few portfolios were left for the Likud. Ne'eman's final departure from the coalition puts an end to Netanyahu's initial aim to include in his cabinet expert professionals from outside the political arena. The first such appointment to fall by the wayside was that of Bank of Israel Governor Ya'acov Frenkel, for whom Netanyahu earmarked the finance portfolio. He was forced, however, to hand that portfolio to Dan Meridor.

Matza commands a considerable powerbase in the Likud's Jerusalem branch and is considered loyal to Netanyahu.

Netanyahu: Delay on Hebron agreement helps Oslo's right-wing opponents

DAVID MAKOVSKY

PALESTINIAN Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat should be aware that delaying a deal on Hebron redeployment will only make it easier for right-wing opponents of the deal to organize and seek to thwart the move, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reportedly told a briefing of European Union (EU) ambassadors based here.

Israeli, Palestinian, and US officials continued talks on security issues yesterday, but there is no

expectation of any significant progress until Arafat returns from Europe tomorrow.

The sources said Netanyahu reiterated his opposition to a European facilitator for peace talks, citing the current US efforts. "We've been very satisfied with the EU's appointment Monday of Spanish Ambassador to Israel Miguel Moratinos to the post of special

envoy in the Middle East, noting he would be basically an observer. "This was not what was originally conceived by the Europeans. They originally wanted someone equivalent to [US special Middle East coordinator Dennis] Ross, but this job will be very different," an official said.

Meanwhile, these officials made it clear Israel will not permit an EU delegation to visit Orient House when it makes a trip here early next month.

French diplomat says France wants 'balanced relationship' with Arabs and Israel

ELDAD BECK PARIS

FRANCE has no intention of becoming the "voice of the Arab world" and hopes to act as an impartial mediator between Israel and the Arab states, a French diplomat said yesterday.

"We frankly desire to have balanced relations with all the parties in the region, so that we will be able to come up with proposals and suggestions, if it becomes necessary," he said.

The long-standing friendship between France and Israel emanates not only from the significance of the French Jewish community, he said, but also because many French citizens have a high

regard for Israel. "We are old allies," he said. "We have always supported and will support your battle against terrorism, and right now we are fighting for the implementation of the association agreement between Israel and the European Union."

During his recent visit, French President Jacques Chirac received the impression that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has a pragmatic attitude regarding the French role in the peace process, the diplo-

mat said. "There was a difference between what Chirac heard from the Israelis and the official Israeli stand and declarations. Some Israelis told Chirac that if France can deliver messages to the other parties, it could be useful," he said.

Meanwhile, Chirac met yesterday with French Chief Rabbi Joseph Sitruk in a bid to counter agitation in the Jewish community concerning his behavior in Israel. Chirac, disturbed by the light security provided for him in Jerusalem, had threatened to leave the country.

That incident and various statements by Chirac gave the French Jewish community, which had widely supported Chirac in last May's presidential election, the impression that he was trying to create a conflict with Israel to improve France's standing with the Arab world.

Barak: I have formula for renewing Syrian talks

LIAT COLLINS

MK Ehud Barak (Labor) said yesterday that he has a formula which would enable the resumption of talks with Syria.

He told the Knesset Israel has nothing to gain by the continued deterioration of the situation in the North and "instead of not gaining, it would be preferable to come out with a new formula."

The correct formula is, to the best of my understanding: "The Israeli government notes the US reports on the process and contents of the talks with the Syrians that took place under the previous govern-

ment." Barak said adopting such a formula would not obligate the government to accept any unsigned agreement and "nobody could demand it of them."

However, we must find a formula to provide a light at the end of the tunnel from the point-of-view of mutual trust."

Barak placed the blame on the tension in the North on Syrian President Hafez Assad, but said Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had contributed to it by "a lack of scope and an amateurish decision-making process."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Dayan sues alleged attacker
MK Yael Dayan yesterday filed a civil suit against alleged assailant Yisrael Lederman, demanding NIS 200,000 in damages for his throwing hot tea on her while she was leaving Hebron last week. She was burned on the face, neck, and chest.

Dayan included in her suit the opinions of two experts, who said it was impossible that Lederman spilled the tea accidentally, as he has claimed.

Joint patrols still not resuming in West Bank
Despite reports to the contrary, joint patrols between Israeli and Palestinian forces have not yet resumed in the West Bank, the army said yesterday. It confirmed that in the past few days a number of joint stationary forces have been deployed at a number of points throughout Palestinian cities. Israel also reported yesterday that some joint patrols had already resumed in Jericho and Nablus. The joint patrols in the Gaza Strip were resumed after being halted for two days.

Six arrested for Golan Heights arson
Six men from the Druze village of Sidana and Majdal Shams on the Golan Heights have been arrested on suspicion they burned a police station in Mess'ada and an income Tax Authority building in Majdal Shams for nationalist reasons some three months ago. The six are also accused of belonging to an illegal organization. They have denied all the charges against them.

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ARRIVALS

World Emmanah welcomes Rena Schendorf, National President Emmanah Women of Canada.

הגדה של פסח

Zaire, Rwanda move closer to war

CYANGUGU, Rwanda (Reuters) - Zaire and Rwanda moved closer to war yesterday, after two days of trading artillery fire across their border and a Rwandan military sortie into Zairean territory.

The UN, meanwhile, announced the appointment of Canadian Ambassador to the US Raymond Chretien as a special envoy to help resolve the crisis in eastern Zaire.

He will travel to the Great Lakes region of central Africa within the next few days and remain for about a month, a spokesman for Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said.

His task will be to consult all parties concerned to "establish the facts relating to the present conflicts and develop urgent plans for defusing the tension and establishing a cease-fire and a process of negotiations," a UN statement said.

He will also explore the possibilities for the early convening of a regional conference, and provide the secretary-general with advice on the size and structure of a UN political presence to be established in the region.

Chretien, 54, has been Canada's ambassador in Washington since 1994. He served as ambassador to Zaire, with joint accreditation to Rwanda, Burundi, and Congo, from 1978 to 1981.

The Organization of African Unity (OAU) also said it is sending a delegation to Zaire and Rwanda to try to defuse the crisis.

It said the delegation was led by Anatole Tiendrebeogo, OAU assistant secretary-general, who would hold talks with Zairean authorities yesterday, then proceed to Rwanda.

Rwandan Vice President and Defense Minister Paul Kagame told a news conference in the capital Kigali that Rwanda would be forced to respond if faced with what he termed Zairean aggression.

"If Zaire brings the war to us, we shall fight Zaire. That is not a big problem for me. We are ready to fight even though we seek no war with Zaire," said Kagame.

Asked whether Rwanda is edging closer to war with Zaire, Kagame replied: "Going by the declarations made by Zaire, there is every indication that we are



Agathe Bukunda feeds enriched milk to her 11-month-old daughter Ira at an emergency feeding center at a camp in Mugunga, Zaire yesterday. Aid workers estimated the camp, which has been cut off by fighting in the area, now has only enough food for eight days. (AP)

going in that direction."

Later, Rwandan Lt.-Col. Firmin Kagame told reporters in this border town he sent "a good-sized" force of troops into Zaire after nightfall on Tuesday in retaliation for Zairean firing into Rwanda.

"After they hit our territory and injured and killed our people and hit civilians we were forced to retaliate," he said. "We retaliated by two means. We fired at them with heavy machine guns and mortars and we sent in a force to destabilize them and to force them away from where they could affect us."

Zaire, a giant country at the heart of Africa, has long been beset in chaos but the latest crisis in its eastern borderlands is seen as potentially the most far-reaching

in its 36-year history as an independent state.

President Mobutu Sese Seko, whose strong-arm tactics have helped to keep his country together, is sick in a Swiss clinic, recovering from cancer surgery. He has not been in Zaire for more than two months.

Deadly rivalry between ethnic Hutus and Tutsis, which resulted in nearly one million dead in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, has spilled into Zaire, which is host to 1.1 million Rwandan refugees.

Many of these refugees will soon run the risk of starvation because the border between Rwanda and Zaire is closed and food aid cannot come in, aid workers say.

Fighting inside Zaire pits

Zairean army troops against Tutsi rebels apparently receiving support from Tutsi-led Rwanda.

The Rwandan refugees in Zaire are Hutus who perpetrated the 1994 genocide of Tutsis and are resisting appeals from the UN, regularly broadcast to them over loudspeakers, to return to Rwanda. They say they fear for their lives if they return.

About half a million of the refugees in Zaire are now out of contact with UN agencies because of the fighting.

The worrying part about these 500,000 refugees is that there really is no assistance. We don't even know whether they have access to water," said UN refugee agency spokesman Panos Moutziris from the Zairean city of Goma.

Even refugees still in camps are receiving minimal food aid because the UN is afraid that supplies will soon run out.

"The roads are blocked, nothing is coming in. We are really very anxious," said Moutziris. "Warehouses are very low in terms of food. Our understanding is that there is enough food for eight days... Right now what we are giving out is the absolute minimum to sustain life."

The UN is trying to avoid a repeat of 1994, when thousands died daily of cholera and dysentery in eastern Zaire camps.

At Mugunga camp near Goma, 400,000 refugees have crowded into the world's biggest, most densely packed camp and the priority is to avert epidemics.

Infighting erupts as countdown starts for Yeltsin surgery

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russia began the countdown for President Boris Yeltsin's heart operation yesterday, but a new row among top politicians could spark further infighting as he goes under the surgeon's knife.

Kremlin spokesman Igor Ignatyev said Yeltsin's doctors would meet immediately after pioneering US heart surgeon Michael DeBakey arrives in Moscow on Monday. "Everything is going according to schedule," he said.

DeBakey, quoted by the BBC, said the operation could take place next week.

"We're shooting for next week, but I can't be any more specific than that because we'll probably be meeting on Monday with the medical team and making that decision," he said.

But as the 65-year-old president waited in the exclusive Barvikha sanatorium outside Moscow for the doctors to set a final date, a row erupted about a consultative council Yeltsin has set up to try to forge a consensus on important issues.

Yeltsin had hoped the four-member council could work together during his absence and avert the damaging infighting which has characterized Russian politics since the president said on September 5 he would have an operation.

But Gennady Seleznyov, communist chief of the lower house of parliament, yesterday asked Yeltsin to sack chief-of-staff Anatoly Chubais and said he would not work with the liberal economist on the council.

"I insist on the immediate dismissal of the president's head of

administration Anatoly Chubais. I do not doubt that I am expressing the opinion of an absolute majority of Russian citizens," said a Seleznyov statement distributed in the State Duma, of which he is chairman.

Chubais, brought into the Kremlin in July, has long been a hate figure for Russia's communists, who despise his privatization program and the free-market economic reforms he helped to launch.

Seleznyov made clear he blamed Chubais for Yeltsin's Tuesday decision to appoint businessman Boris Berezovsky as deputy secretary of the influential Russian Security Council.

The Security Council, chaired by Yeltsin, groups senior government ministers, including those of defense and the interior, and officials of the Federal Security Service (FSB), successor organization of the KGB.

The communist-dominated Duma has already locked horns with the government over the 1997 budget, which deputies say includes unrealistic spending plans and provides too little to support the poor, including those who have not been paid for months.

Yeltsin has already handed some powers over to Prime Minister Viktor Chornomyrdin, who will take charge during the surgery, which will relieve clogged arteries supplying blood to Yeltsin's heart.

DeBakey said doctors are expecting three or four bypasses. The Russian operating team will be led by cardiologist Renat Akbulurin, who will use equipment from DeBakey's Houston center.

US-backed Iraqi Kurd peace process begins

ANKARA (Reuters) - Rival Iraqi Kurdish militias yesterday started a fresh search to bring peace to northern Iraq and forge a US-backed united front against Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

A senior US diplomat is overseeing the talks between representatives of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) as part of Washington's plans to prevent Saddam from spreading his influence over the region again.

"We are here to help in consolidating the cease-fire and working to restabilize the situation in northern Iraq," US mediator Robert Pelletreau said in an opening speech.

The Kurdish conflict has weakened Washington's anti-Baghdad efforts and given Saddam a foothold in the Western-protected region after a five-year break.

Iraqi armored divisions joined forces with Massoud Barzani's KDP in late August and captured Arbil from the PUK, led by Jalal Talabani. Baghdad's military thrust sparked US missile strikes on southern Iraq and prompted Washington to evacuate its agents and relief workers from the area.

Pelletreau, assistant secretary of state for near eastern affairs, brokered a truce between the KDP and the PUK last week.

Iraq, which has urged the Kurds to make peace with each other through the central government, slammed the US bid.

"These vicious contacts ... and

these meetings being held in Ankara under US auspices are a flagrant interference in Iraq's internal affairs," the ruling Baath party's daily *al-Thawra* said yesterday.

Sources close to the talks predicted slow progress.

"I'm not expecting a full agreement after these talks. There's still a lot of mistrust between them," a diplomat told Reuters.

The PUK and the KDP joined in a power-sharing regional parliament in 1992, but their intermittent clashes since May 1994 have split northern Iraq into two separate spheres of influence.

Two U.S.-brokered rounds of peace talks in Ireland last year failed to end a Kurdish dispute over control of the key city of Arbil and the sharing of revenues from a KDP oil trade on the Turkish border.

These issues, still in dispute, may be taken up later in the talks. "We're looking first at strengthening the cease-fire, confidence building measures to reduce the tension," the diplomat said.

British and Turkish diplomats were also attending the Ankara talks, expected to last two or three days.

Military involvement by Baghdad and accusations of Iranian backing have raised the stakes in the latest Kurdish clashes.

The KDP accuses Iran of backing Talabani's PUK militarily. Both Talabani and Teheran deny this.

The two faction leaders, bitter personal rivals, sent aides to the talks but were not present themselves.

South Africa's apartheid 'Prime Evil' jailed for life

PRETORIA (Reuters) - A South African judge yesterday jailed former state assassin Eugene de Kock for more than 200 years, describing him as a chilling and revolting agent for apartheid.

"These actions leave one with a chilling feeling ... It fills a person with revulsion," Judge Willem van der Merwe told the ex-police colonel, known by his colleagues as "Prime Evil."

The neat, bespectacled 47-year-old career policeman was convicted in August of six murders of black anti-apartheid activists, an attempted murder, two conspiracy to murder charges, a culpable homicide charge, and scores of lesser counts of fraud and illegal possession of arms and ammunition.

"It is correct that his activities came from a certain time, to which we will ever return," the judge said. "With this sentencing a warning must be given that such actions will not be tolerated."

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who is chairing South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, said the severity of the sentence was fitting but those who gave de Kock his orders also had to be called to account.

"He was part of a whole system and there were those who gave orders. Those who were ultimately responsible must not be allowed to get away ... The foot soldiers must not be the only ones who get clobbered," Tutu said, adding that the same applied to anti-apartheid forces.

De Kock was in charge in the 1980s of a secret

police unit based at Vaalklaas outside Pretoria where the elimination of troublesome anti-government activists was planned.

De Kock told the court in September, in testimony aimed at reducing the severity of his sentences, that his superiors in the police and government, including the then president P.W. Botha, had full knowledge of what he was doing.

The former hit-squad chief has applied for amnesty from Tutu's truth commission, which can free perpetrators of human rights abuses who confess fully. If the commission grants de Kock amnesty, the sentences will fall away.

Tutu said the possibility of amnesty for people like de Kock was part of the price South Africa had had to pay for a relatively peaceful transition to majority rule.

"This country was about to go up into flames and we then had to negotiate a settlement at the heart of which is amnesty... people are going to find amnesty a real shock to the system, especially after 'Prime Evil' and all that," he said.

De Kock stood expressionless in the dock as Judge van der Merwe imposed one life sentence for one of the six murders and another life sentence for a conspiracy to murder charge.

The judge imposed six terms of 20 years each and a range of shorter sentences for a total of 212 years. South Africa's constitutional court ruled earlier this year that the death sentence, while still on the law books, may no longer be passed.

26 killed in Somali battle for airstrip near Mogadishu

MOGADISHU (Reuters) - Twenty-six people were killed and 48 wounded yesterday when forces of Somali faction leader Ali Hassan Osman Atto attacked and captured an airstrip from militia-men of his rival Hussein Aided, witnesses said.

They said Osman Atto's militia-

meo attacked Aided's forces at Middle Shabelle airstrip, 50 km. from Mogadishu, and seized it in an attack with eight "technical" four-wheel-drive battlewagons.

Abdi Osman, a man wounded in the fighting and taken to the Hassan Jus Memorial Hospital in Mogadishu, said Atto's militiamen

shot at anything in sight at the strip - using mainly by suppliers of the mild stimulant qat from neighboring Kenya.

Osman said an Indian pilot who had landed in his Cessna plane carrying qat was captured and his plane was hit. He said 26 people were killed and 48 were wounded

including himself.

On Tuesday, 13 people were killed and up to 16 others wounded in an attack by unidentified gunmen in the Bar Ubah area inhabited by Hussein Aided supporters south of Mogadishu. No one has claimed responsibility for the attack.

The fighting this week was the bloodiest flare up since Somali factions - including Atto and Aided - agreed in Nairobi two

weeks ago to end hostilities, and pledged a continuation of dialogue for a peace process. The peace deal was brokered by Kenyan President Daniel arap Moi.

On Tuesday night, Abdullahi Mobareed, an Osman Atto supporter, was killed in an attack on his house in Mogadishu by unidentified assailants, witnesses said. It was not known whether the airstrip had anything to do with his killing.

WORLD BRIEFS

Neutral Swiss to join NATO plan

ZURICH (Reuters) - Neutral Switzerland edged away from its traditional isolationism yesterday by announcing it would join NATO's Partnership for Peace (PFP) program in a bid to promote security in post-Cold War Europe.

But the government took pains to ensure the conservative majority of Swiss that the move did not jeopardize the country's treasured neutrality nor signal its intention to join the Western military alliance.

"The federal council [cabinet] wants to make clear that participating in PFP does not create any obligations under international law and does not affect neutrality," a statement issued after the cabinet met in Berne said. "The federal council will make clear that Switzerland is neutral and does not want to enter NATO."

Chinese dissident Wang Dan jailed

BEIJING (Reuters) - A Beijing court yesterday sentenced dissident and former student leader Wang Dan to 11 years in prison, the latest hammer-blow struck by China against its tiny band of pro-democracy activists.

The Beijing Number One Intermediate People's Court took less than four hours to convict Wang of plotting to subvert the government, but the young dissident's family quickly denounced the verdict and vowed to appeal.

Wang, 27, was sentenced to 11 years in prison and deprived of his political rights for a further two years, the Xinhua news agency said in a long report hailing the fairness of the trial.

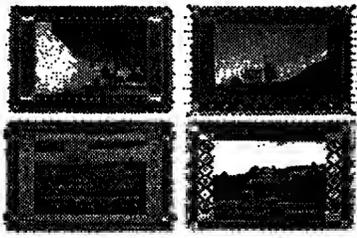
Ancient statuette might be sign of Albania temple

TIRANA (Reuters) - A solid gold statuette of the Greek goddess Artemis found in shallow waters off the Albanian coast could indicate the existence of an ancient temple nearby, a newspaper said yesterday.

The daily *Gazeta Shqiptare* said a teenage boy fished the golden figure, which stands 10 cm. tall and weighs 50 grams, out of water near the historic port of Durres, about 45 km. west of Tirana.

The statue, found about 10 days ago, portrays Artemis as a huntress with a bow and a quiver of arrows. The daily said the boy's family turned down an offer of \$3,000 for the figure from a foreign collector and instead turned it over to local archaeologist, Hasan Ulqini

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The blame game

NINE days ago a senior Syrian official threatened to go to war if Israel refuses to withdraw from the Golan Heights. On Tuesday, Syria's Foreign Minister Farouk Shara said that charges that Syria was preparing a surprise attack were baseless. At the same time, government-backed Syrian newspapers have this week accused Israel of preparing for war, and warned that Syria will respond accordingly.

It would be a mistake to read too much into the pitch of the war drums at a given moment, since Syria has an interest in threatening war without going to war, just as she has an interest in talking about peace without making peace. Syria's leader Hafez Assad is an old pro at the use of proxy war against Israel; why risk the real thing?

Over the years Syria has failed to show any eagerness for exchanging a full peace for full withdrawal from the Golan. It is hard to see why Syria would see going to war as a less risky way to regain the Golan than making peace. Despite Syria's massive numerical superiority on the Golan front, the strategic balance does not favor Syria. If it attacks Israel, it risks losing military assets that will not be easily replaced, given the collapse of the Soviet Union and Syria's financial situation.

On the other hand, if Assad is thinking of going to war, he could find three reasons to support such folly. First, Syria succeeded in taking a provocative step — moving special forces from Beirut to near Israel's base on Mount Hermon — and blaming it on Israel. Second, Arafat succeeded in inciting, if not ordering, his own police to shoot Israelis — and having the entire world and half of Israel blame Benjamin Netanyahu. Third, the speculation regarding a "limited" Syrian attack against Israel has not led to massive diplomatic pressure against Syria; instead, it has led to explanations that this is the understandable result of Israel's refusal to accept the previous government's hints that the Golan was available for the asking.

If anything was to tempt Syria toward war, it is the assessment that no matter how flimsy the excuse or how disproportionate the Syrian response, Israel will be blamed for Syrian aggression against Israel. The converse is also true: If Assad believes that the world will blame and punish Syria for aggression against Israel, then his strategic calculation would shift decisively against taking such a risk.

The primary factor in Assad's calculation of

who would win the blame game is his assessment of the United States. Would the US respond to Syrian aggression with the even-handed rhetoric that followed the outbreak of Palestinian violence against Israel? Would the US response be to condemn "violence on both sides" and push for accelerated negotiations regarding the Golan? If so, Assad might decide that the prospects for diplomatic gains through aggression outweigh the risk.

Israel is correctly working now to remove any excuse the Syrians might have for going to war and to raise the military price of any aggression. In this vein, Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai was right to tell the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee that a clear majority of the cabinet is open to some territorial compromise on the Golan, but that Israel was preparing for any eventuality.

While Israel is taking prudent steps, it is the US that has the opportunity to decisively shift Assad's calculation toward peace and against aggression. Although the fruitless procession of successive secretaries of state to Damascus may give the impression that the US cannot influence rogue regimes such as Syria, this is not the case.

There are a number of potential US responses to Syrian aggression which, if communicated to Syria in advance, would most likely deter any military moves. The US, for example, could tell Damascus that, in the event of Syrian aggression, the United States would introduce and seek passage of a United Nations Security Council resolution to condemn and impose international sanctions upon Syria.

The United States could also publicly blame Syria, not only for threatening to resort to violence but for the fact the peace process has stalled. Perhaps even more importantly, the US could begin to take a greater interest in Syria's implementation of the Taif Accords, which require that Syria withdraw from Lebanon.

In other words, the US, instead of being "evenhanded," and thus equating the aggressor with its victim, could do its best to make sure that Syria loses the blame game and is, at least diplomatically, punished for any signs of aggression.

For a long time now, US policy toward Syria has been marked by a large dose of carrots and very few sticks. The time has come to try a new policy inspired by the eagle on the Great Seal of the United States: olive branch in one talon, arrows in the other.

OLEG 96



Red spies in Jerusalem

IT was in the mid-1980s. A stockily-built man stood perspiring in the sweltering heat of a summer day in what little shade there was close to the clock tower in Jaffa. Removing his jacket, he unfasted his tie. He went and bought himself a bottle of ice-cold mineral water, then returned to the rendezvous point.

Increasingly restive and impatient, he repeatedly glanced around him.

Suddenly a number of men could be seen heading for the clock tower, simultaneously, from different directions. Unhurriedly, like a well-rehearsed ballet sequence, they closed in to form a circle around the now white-faced stranger.

One of the new arrivals spoke to him in Russian in a low, firm voice. "Don't make any fuss," he said. "Follow us quietly."

In this quiet way did a top-ranking KGB espionage chief, a colonel on a mission direct from Moscow, fall into a trap laid by Israeli intelligence officers in one of their greatest coups.

Details of this heavy blow to the prestige and international functioning of the KGB were revealed for the first time by Oleg Kalugin, another senior KGB officer who turned up in the US in 1986. He revealed some of the story to Ha'aretz in an interview on October 11.

Kalugin claimed that the Soviet Union had been using the green-domed Russian Orthodox Cathedral of the Holy Trinity across the road from the police station in the heart of Jerusalem as the nerve center of all USSR espionage activities in Israel after Moscow broke off diplomatic relations with Israel in the wake of the 1967 Six Day War.

Disguised in the priestly robes of both high- and low-ranking church dignitaries, these KGB agents conducted full-scale spying activities in the Jewish state.

The arrest in Jaffa of the colonel, who had come to Israel in the guise of a German tourist but was really here to brief his operatives and pick up documents and micro-film gathered by them set alarm bells ringing in the Kremlin. It was immediately clear to the KGB that it was being betrayed by one or more agents in Jerusalem.

Almost immediately afterwards a senior KGB operative in Jerusalem left the Russian Compound area in a hurry and sought asylum in Israel. With him was his wife, a decoding and cipher expert. Amid immense secrecy the couple not only told Israeli intelligence everything they knew about KGB activities in this country, the wife also

URI DAN
DENNIS EISENBERG

explained the system of KGB coding used in spying activities throughout the West.

This was a time when American intelligence was still struggling with the Soviet Union's coding methods. As a bonus, the wife brought her manuals with her. Within a short space of time the couple were flown to the US, where they continued to reveal

What is the link between the defection of a Russian couple in the '80s and the Pollard case?

she believed that religion was the opium of the masses.

"After defecting, she explained that as she listened to the sounds of the devotions, something stirred inside her. She remembered that as a little girl she used to hear her grandmother praying on Friday nights in a 'funny language.' The sounds she heard at the Western Wall echoed again and again in her mind.

"Only then did she remember that her grandparents had been Jews. It had meant nothing to her. She was taught Communism in high school, and her entire family had abandoned Judaism.

"Now as she spoke to religious Russian-born Jewish women at the Wall, she suddenly became interested in her Jewish past. 'The more I learned about what being a Jew meant the more I was compelled to seek out my roots,' she confessed after she and her husband made their decision never to return to the Soviet Union.

Nothing is known about her husband's reasons for defecting with her. It was considered safer for the couple to travel to the US. There, after she had handed over her manuals and specialist information to the American authorities, the couple were given new identities.

There is an important link in this story to a man unjustly rotting in an American high-security jail. The US's claim has always been that Jonathan Pollard transmitted secrets to Moscow via Soviet agents operating in Jerusalem.

But had that been the case, surely the wife of the double-agent couple, the cipher specialist, would have let the Israelis know about it?

It has long been no secret that Pollard's alleged betrayal of US agents in the Soviet Union can be laid at the door of another man, the unmasked US traitor Aldrich Ames. The revelations detailed above turn American claims about Pollard's role in that betrayal, which led to the death of US agents, on their head.

It is the height of cruelty and injustice for the American authorities to persist in blaming Pollard when they know full well that he betrayed not a single soul to the KGB. Their damnation of Pollard is as false as the religious guise of the "priests" who masqueraded as men of God in a cathedral in the heart of Jerusalem.

A final irony: a year ago Israeli authorities handed over Russian property in the compound area to Moscow.

The writers are authors of 'The Mossad: Secrets of the Israeli Secret Service and other books on the Middle East.'

Space age

LARRY DERFNER

I was driving up Hayarkon Street in Tel Aviv the other day and as I approached Frishman Street, this towering spectacle hit me in the eye. On the side of an apartment building was a three-story-high mural advertising Amstel beer.

The painting was nice enough, done by the popular Tel Aviv muralist Rami Meiri. (I know this because Meiri's signature was on the building in big letters.) It depicted young, attractive, happy people as if they were leaning out of the windows reaching for a giant bottle of beer.

Just below the roof, in letters about a meter high, was the word "Amstel."

Had it been on a billboard, I wouldn't have minded. I probably wouldn't have noticed. Billboards are made for advertising. But an apartment building? People's homes?

I don't want to give the wrong idea. The ground floor of this building is taken up by the Super Toast food stand and Mulligan's Irish Bar. The area of Hayarkon and Frishman streets isn't exactly unblemished by commerce; it doesn't radiate a spirit of home and hearth.

But still, people live on the other side of that ad. That wall is part of their homes, it's what separates their homes from the world. It's what keeps their homes private. And now their homes are being used to advertise Amstel beer.

My sympathies aren't so much with the tenants, because I don't know if they're bothered by the ad or not. My sympathies are more with the rest of us — the public, who, even if we're not aware of it, are receiving a pretty unsettling message from that mural: Not even our homes are safe from the reach of commercialism.

BUT WHY should I be surprised at this latest territorial conquest by the forces of advertising? They took over our bodies nearly 30 years ago.

It was in the late-'60s, that sorely-missed time of idealism and spirituality, that teenagers started wearing rock band logos

Our homes, cars, even our bodies don't belong to us any more

on their T-shirts.

Well, thought the ad men, if they'll wear rock band logos, they'll wear record album covers and record company logos, and the logos of the international conglomerates that bought the record companies.

By now, of course, kids from eight to 80 are wearing T-shirts, sweatshirts, windbreakers and caps advertising cement manufacturers, insurance companies and anything else with a brand name.

Remember when clothing companies hid the little label inside the clothes? Now it's a big label, and it's on the back of the collar and waving from the hem of the pocket, next to where the company's name (again) is embossed.

Caps, shirts, pants, shoes — we're walking billboards. The same thing happened to our cars. In decades past the name of the car was bolted on in discreet little letters in the front and back. Now it's painted on in big letters, next to a bronco or tiger or surfer, on the front, back and doors.

Our cars — which, let's face it, are our homes away from home — don't belong to us anymore. Every time we drive out of a garage, tire store, muffler dealer, plate glass company or upholsterer, we've got another bumper sticker to show for it.

Have you ever demanded that they remove the sticker? Have you ever heard of anyone who did? No, it's bad form. It's anti-capitalist. We are supposed to give over our cars and our bodies to help businesses get ahead, willingly, without complaint.

What's the problem? You wear my logo, I'll wear yours. Look, we're creating jobs, alright? This Amstel mural on the side of a residential building was just a natural progression. I expect to see other companies following suit. There are countless acres of blank exterior wall on apartment houses, and on cottages for that matter, which could be used to turn a profit.

I've got an even better idea — tattoos. It seems like everybody's got a little butterfly or angel drilled into his or her skin somewhere; why not tattoos of Penzoil or Bank Leumi instead? Big, bold, right on the forehead.

There's a lot of wasted space out there ready to be exploited.

The writer is a journalist living in Tel Aviv.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DUTCH TOURIST GUIDES

Sir, — I was gratified to read your report (October 10) of the Dutch government's decision to share in the financing of a book on the Righteous Gentiles of Holland who, at the risk of their lives, saved Jews during the German occupation. Since the subject has now again been raised, the Dutch government may find it fit to deal also with the following problem that I experienced on a sightseeing bus tour of Amsterdam in May.

The guide, a pleasant young man in his thirties, described the sights to us in German and English, after having ascertained that these were the languages of the passengers. These were exact translations one of the other, down to the last jocular remark.

After he had pointed out the central memorial for the war dead in the Dam, we reached the former Jewish quarter where he pointed out the Portuguese (Sephardi) and "German" (the Dutch way of saying "Ashkenazi") synagogues, he showed us "the monument to the Jews who fell in the war."

Next, we reached the monument to the "Amsterdam port workers who held a strike in 1943." Not a word about the fact that their strike was a courageous protest against the Germans' deportation of the Jews, for which some of the stevedores paid with their lives. And, when we passed the Anne Frank house, he described it as "The house where the girl who wrote the diary was hidden. She died in 1945." Not a

PLO VIOLATIONS

word on why she had to hide and how she died.

At the end of the tour, the guide, like those on the other two tours we took, hoped we had enjoyed it and told us we could show our appreciation of his and the driver's efforts, if we felt like it, by dropping something into his plate. When I made my contribution as we got off the bus, I remarked to him: "They did not fall, they were murdered." I did not mention the word "Jews," but he immediately responded, without a moment's hesitation: "Of course I know, but I've got Germans on the bus."

Perhaps the Dutch government might suggest to the tour companies that they instruct their guides how to deal with the subject of the Jews of Holland and the Dutchmen and women who risked their lives to save some of them, which they can hardly avoid as many villages have monuments to the brave men and women who were shot by the Germans for sheltering Jews.

If the companies feel that the subject is bad for business, or for tips, they may perhaps do best by ignoring it altogether and so, at least, allow the Jewish victims and the brave Dutch saviors to rest in peace.

Also, by allowing the tragic sites to be described the way our pleasant guide did, they are instrumental in making it all too easy for the growing number of Holocaust deniers to mislead the public.

YACOV FRIEDLER
Haifa.

CHAINING PATIENTS TO BED

Sir, — I your issue of October 20, you carried a story that the Israel Medical Association sent a letter to the director-general of Hadassah University Hospital with a copy to Defense of Children International saying that the chaining of patients to their beds should be prevented. While this is a laudable goal, I believe that your readers should know that this is not an uncommon practice in the US.

In hospitals in three major cities in the US where I have worked, it is standard policy for prison officials to apply either leg or hand cuffs to

patients and to apply the other end to the patient's bed. While the sight is not pretty, the need to prevent the escape of the prisoner and the safety of other patients who may be in that same room are overriding concerns.

As Jews, we have always held ourselves to a higher standard of conduct than others. While this is a laudable goal, realizing where we stand is important. We must not view this behavior as the exception to the civilized norm.

STEPHEN M. STOWE, M.D.
Jerusalem (New York).

CHIEF JUSTICE BARAK

Sir, — The US was fortunate to have had great justices in the Supreme Court, like John Marshall and Earl Warren. Israel is just as fortunate in having Aharon Barak.

Justice Barak is the best friend of anyone seeking justice, including the Orthodox rabbis who have forgotten a few of the Ten Commandments in trying to enforce the one about the Sabbath.

SIDNEY E. NEVLER
Haifa.

PICTURE POSTSCRIPT



This is not something to try in your bathtub: John Cook of Valley, Alabama, attempts to break the world record for the largest soap bubble. The record is 50 feet long, held by David Stein of New York.

מלא מן אלוכל

Space age

LARRY DERFNER

I was driving on Hayash Street in Tel Aviv the other day and as I approached Frishman Street, this town spectacle hit me in the eye. It was a three-story-high building advertising Amstel beer. The painting was nice enough done by the popular Tel Aviv muralist Rami Meiri. (I know because Meiri's signature was depicted in big letters on the building in big letters.)

people as if they were leaning of the windows reaching for giant bottle of beer. Just below the roof, in the about a meter high, was the "Amstel".

Had it been on a billboard wouldn't have missed. I probably wouldn't have noticed. Billboards are made for advertising. But an apartment building's homes?

I don't want to give the y. The ground floor of building is taken up by the food stand and Mulk. The area of Hayash and Frishman streets isn't as unblemished by commerce doesn't radiate a spirit of life and health.

But still, people live on other side of that. That's part of their homes. It's what makes their homes from apartments. It's what keeps it from being used to advertise.

Why do impatients aren't so sympathetic to the tenants, because I'm sure they're bothered by the noise. My sympathies are with the rest of us who even if we're not getting a message from the building, we're still in the reach of commerce.

Our homes, cars even our bodies don't belong to us any more

Eccentric people can still be capable parents

DEAR RUTHIE RUTHIE BLUM



DEAR Ruthie, I am concerned about a neighbors' son, but feel that I have little right to interfere. The couple is very eccentric and does not really fit into the community. Their small house is piled high with old newspapers and boxes of broken electrical fittings etc., to the point where it is hard to find a space to sit. The husband is very domineering and publicly contemptuous of his wife. He keeps a tally of every single shekel that she spends on housekeeping, saying she is a spendthrift incapable of managing money.

are male); a caring, involved mother, and a compassionate female neighbor all contribute to the shaping of this boy's sense of the significance of gender. Whether he is a budding homosexual or transvestite is unclear at this early stage. Even his contemplation of death should not set off automatic alarm bells. All children, at some point, become interested in the subject.

This does not mean that you need sit back and do nothing. The next time the boy's mother discusses his problems in school with you, for example, you could take advantage of the opportunity to share with her the contents of your own discussions with him. You might even suggest she talk it over with the school psychologist. You can also continue to do what you have been doing all along, by being a compassionate adult friend to this child.

Dear Ruthie, I am currently looking for another job and have had several interviews. During two of these, I was asked the following question: "What are your weak points?" I am all too well aware of my shortcomings. How can I reply positively and honestly, without being evasive, in a way that will not jeopardize my chance for employment?

Dear II, It is not the content of your reply which is liable to trip you up, but rather the body language you exhibit while answering. If you can control the natural inclination to grow tense and uncomfortable at having to spell out your weaknesses before a total stranger - perhaps through a little humor - you will do more to impress a potential employer than if you appear to have no weaknesses. On the other hand, you can also lie a little bit. Putting an interviewer through the emotional wringer is as aggressive as it is hostile. As such, it is not worthy of complete honesty.

Letters should be addressed to: 'Dear Ruthie,' POB 81, 91000 Jerusalem. For E-mail: editors@jpost.co.il

Until a chance discovery, the life of Harry Houdini, who died 70 years ago today, was as much of a mystery as his methods, Gabriel Citron writes

WHEN Ruth Brandon, Houdini's biographer, said that "conjuring tricks of one sort or another lie at the very roots of Jewish history," she would have had a hard time persuading the talmudic scholars of old that biblical miracles were mere trickery. Every sage would maintain that when Moses turned the staff into a serpent, for example, it was a miracle: the kind of magic that only God could facilitate.

Nevertheless she would have had one scholar on her side: Maimonides. According to him, "All magic, even that discussed in the Scripture, is sleight of hand. Only foolish and ignorant people believe in it." Whether or not conjuring lies at the heart of Jewish history is disputable. But, without a doubt, Jews most certainly lie at the very heart of conjuring history. Jewish input actually dates all the way back to the 1700s, when conjuring was only just becoming an accepted theatre art. Jacob Philadelphia, who was born to Orthodox Jewish parents, was the "celebrated conjuror" of the 18th century. So of course was Harry Houdini, son of Rabbi Meir Samuel Weisz.



Houdini the illusionist also displayed feats of amazing strength and dexterity. He could escape from any manacle or restraint that bound him.

Stress was eating away at the rabbi, who was obsessed with the notion of his own death. When Erik was 12, he was called to his father's bedside and made to swear on the Bible that he would sustain his mother as long as he lived. There was, in fact, no need for an oath as Erik loved his mother dearly, and later he would be sending back half his salary to his mother.

At the age of 20 Erik fell in love with a 16-year-old Roman Catholic, Bess Rahner. Having known each other for a week the couple eloped and were married on Coney Island, in June 1894. Bess and Erik toured as the "Houdinis," named after the French magician Robert-Houdin. Erik had procured the name Harry as it was the Americanized form of

"Eric" - his nickname. So, Erik Weisz, son of a rabbi, became Harry Houdini, monarch of manacles, king of cards, master illusionist, and escapologist extraordinaire. HOUDINI WAS not merely an illusionist, he also displayed feats of amazing strength, skill and dexterity. He allowed himself to be bound and shackled by any kind of manacle or restraint, and he invariably escaped. Houdini possessed the rare skill of showmanship. He managed to keep an audience of thousands on the edges of their seats, while he was sitting, concealed, inside a curtained cabinet struggling to free himself from the night's contraption. It is said that when he escaped from the restraint in too quick a time

itions with Judaism were most probably subconscious. Houdini toured the world regally, and amassed a royal fortune. As his riches accumulated he became more and more charitable. Once on leaving a theater, he was embraced by an old man. On enquiring what he was doing, the old man replied, "Why, don't you recognize me? You have been paying my rent for the last seven years!" As one of Houdini's early biographers points out, good deeds were drummed into him at home.

IN 1918, by which time Houdini was a household name, he founded The Rabbits' Sons' Theatrical Association. To become a member of this exclusive club you had to be the son of a rabbi or Jewish scholar. Houdini was president, with Al Jolson and Irving Berlin second and third in command. One biography reminds us Houdini was not alone in his career choice. George Gershwine, the Warner brothers and Fanny Brice "all shared the rabbinical heritage."

As the years rolled on Houdini's name became associated with more than just magic. He struck up a friendship with the American president Theodore Roosevelt. He entertained royalty in countries and continents around the world. He was a pioneering aviator - the first to make a successful flight above Australia. He was an unparalleled collector - owning the biggest drama library in America, and he was a pioneering filmmaker, producing, acting and writing some of the first adventure films. On the night of Halloween 1926, Houdini died. He had been taken ill with acute appendicitis a week earlier. This, it is thought, was contracted after a university student punched him in the stomach, bursting the appendix. Houdini had claimed he could withstand punches to the mid-section, unfortunately, when the student decided to put this to the test Houdini was suffering from a broken ankle and an injured kidney. He didn't have time to stand and brace himself before the fatal barrage. Houdini's legend lives on even to this day. It isn't really very surprising his name has stood out above the rest, since he would go to any lengths to gain publicity. Unfortunately the days when showmen hang from skyscrapers by their ankles, while escaping from a straitjacket, have long since passed. Houdini risked his life for the sake of showmanship, but for him it was no risk, because showmanship was his life. "So," concludes Brandon, "the evolution of Houdini from rabbi's son to vaudeville in 19th-century America was less bizarre than it seems."

Argentina still hushes up the past

JACOBO Timerman recalls with horror the torture and antisemitic taunts he suffered as a political prisoner in Argentina under the military dictatorship 20 years ago. Now living in voluntary exile in neighboring Uruguay, nothing makes his blood boil more than the current government's attempts to make amends through offers of financial compensation to victims or their relatives. "It's a charade. They want to make the world believe they're concerned about human rights," said Timerman, a journalist and best-selling author. "It's all part of this new image they want to create."

prod-like device - and imprisonment is documented in his book *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*. "I'm sure Siderman deserved the money. But look at the motives for the payment," he said in a telephone interview. "All the government wanted was to hush up the past and avoid a scandal in a foreign court." Argentina, like several other Latin American countries ruled by military juntas in the 1970s, has a past it would rather forget. More than 9,000 people disappeared during the so-called "dirty war" when the military cracked down on leftists and political dissidents. Some human rights groups put that figure closer to 30,000. But tales of torture and repression refuse to go away. Last year, an ex-navy officer, Adolfo Scilingo, admitted political prisoners were dragged and tossed alive out of planes into the Atlantic Ocean on weekly "death flights."

The lonely, little voice of Communist Party USA

IT may be the living definition of a hopeless cause. The Berlin Wall and the Soviet Union have crumbled and Karl Marx has been knocked off his pedestal. But, from a shabby building in the city that is a shrine to capitalist wealth, a small band of comrades carries on the fight. Just a few blocks from the gritty shops of Fifth Avenue and Manhattan's towering skyscrapers, the Communist Party USA is mobilizing for the November 5 US presidential elections with the slogan "People before Profits, Tax the Rich!"

power in the US. Hall, a former steelworker, is 86, and has led the party since 1959, running several times in US presidential elections and watching the rise and fall of one of the 20th century's defining political movements. The last time he ran, in 1984, he won just 36,000 votes. The party headquarters, a nondescript building in one of Manhattan's less prosperous areas, is also showing its age. "We had a big struggle and some people left," said party spokeswoman Terry Albano. "But we retained the centrality of the class struggle." The party does not give membership figures, saying it fears persecution from the authorities. Some estimates put total membership at between 15,000 and 20,000, although independent observers say it is a fraction of the figure. But the party says greater insecurity, less welfare and huge job cuts in corporate America have swelled the ranks in its local offices across the United States, with African-Americans and Hispanics leading the way. "In the last few years, we have experienced definite growth, people joining off the streets," said Albano. Despite the claim, most people at the recent election meeting seemed to be white and either middle-aged or elderly, remnants of a past when the party had more members and when organized labor had real

The Cambridge Illustrated History of BRITISH THEATRE by Simon Trussler
Lushly illustrated in the best tradition of the Cambridge University Press, this 404 pp. volume presents a social and cultural history of Britain as much as a description of actors, directors, designers and authors. From the early Middle Ages to contemporary times and themes, the author describes early forms of drama and religious ceremony and weaves the history of social and political forces which shaped theatre. Selected contents include: The Era of the Outdoor Playhouses; The Restoration Theatre; Romance and Realism; The War and The Long Weekend; Theatre and the Marketplace. Hardcover, color and black-and-white prints, photographs, sketches, playbills; Chronology, Glossary, Who's Who, Select Bibliography, Index. JP Price: NIS 191, incl. VAT, postage and handling (in Israel) Door-to-door delivery (where available): NIS 199
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BUSINESS & FINANCE

Thursday, October 31, 1996

Tourism fell 8% between March and September

DAVID HARRIS

THE number of tourists arriving in Israel by air in the key March to September period was 8 percent lower than the comparable figure last year, the Central Bureau of Statistics reported this week.

The forecast for the entire year from the Tourism Ministry is that total visitor numbers will be down from the 1995 figure of 2,215,500. Still, it will not be as low as in 1994, when 1,838,700 tourists visited. That is because of the 30% increase in tourism in January and February this year.

In the first nine months of the year, 1,792,100 visitors entered the country, 1,590,800 of whom were tourists. Of the tourists, some 1,219,800 arrived by air.

In September, 171,400 people entered the country, of whom 142,300 were tourists, and 29,100 arrived at Israel's seaports. Some 8,700 tourists came into Israel at Eilat, and a further 15,100 along

the border with Jordan at the Allenby, Arava and Jordan River crossing points.

The security situation since late February has been the main factor in causing cancellations, according to the Tourism Ministry. The suicide bombings, Operation Grapes of Wrath, the threat of attacks during the election period, the TWA crash in the US and the pessimistic perception of stalling peace talks have all played a role.

"The main problem is that there are so few new bookings," said the ministry's deputy director-general for marketing, Shmuel Zurel. "We are directing our marketing towards the faithful tourists - Jews who may cancel, but will always be the first to return, and devoted Christians, mainly from Germany, Scandinavia and the United States."

The ministry will publish its September figures on Sunday.

Central bank: Economy slowed in second and third quarters

DAVID HARRIS

THE economy slowed in the six months to September, according to statistics published by the Bank of Israel's Research Department yesterday.

The second quarter was dominated by high demand, with public and private consumption rising quickly.

There were exceptions, with demand in the building and tourism sectors diminishing.

There was also a slower rate of increase in activity in industrial production and a decline in the number of building startups.

The central bank noted the slowdown in GDP gathered pace in the second quarter. The integrated index of supply and demand indexes also pointed to a slowdown in the economy.

The Consumer Price index rose by 10.8 percent in annual terms during the same period - higher than the government's upper inflation limit of 10%. However, in the third quarter there was a noticeable

slowing in price increases.

As a result of high inflation and the government deficit, the Bank of Israel decided to increase interest rates until the end of the second quarter. Through the third quarter, this trend was reversed, and the central bank added another rate-cut to its recent run of them this week.

The exchange rate rose at the start of the period, but declined sharply following the election by late August, it reached the bottom of the fluctuation band for the shekel the central bank imposes. The band marks the limits to which the bank will allow the markets to determine the value of the shekel.

The trade deficit remained high at some \$700 million a month. Trade conditions worsened during the second quarter after 6 months of improvement.

Workforce supply grew consid-

erably during the second quarter, and consequently there was an increase in unemployment, a trend that is continuing. The real wages of business-sector employees rose slightly in the second quarter.

To the end of September, the government's current account deficit totalled NIS 8.8 billion, NIS 1.3b. higher than the government-set maximum for the year. The majority of this unexpected deficit reflects a failure to collect predicted revenues.

Around June there was an intensification of turnover in provident funds, a fall in the value of shares, and a halt in flotations on the stock exchange. That led to a general sense of crisis, according to the central bank. In turn, the Bank of Israel declared a safety net to prevent a flight from the markets.

By the end of the period covered by the research, the falls in share values had been all but erased, the bank reported.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Agriculture ministry finds some kosher abattoirs unsanitary: Slaughter of animals in some haredi communities may be suitable for the kashrut authorities, but may be performed in unsanitary, "non-veterinary" conditions, the Ministry of Agriculture said yesterday.

Two tons of chicken and turkey meat seized from a temporary abattoir at Moshav Komemiyut proved to be contaminated and a danger to public health. Ministry inspectors also found some of the meat at Moshav Uza and at a butcher's shop in Kiryat Gat to be contaminated. *David Harris*

Labor productivity slipping, institute says: The declining standards in labor productivity are cause for increasing concern, according to the Labor Productivity Institute. The organization believes productivity in the workforce will grow by less than 1 percent in 1996. In the late 1980s, the average annual figure was 3.4%. *David Harris*

Insurance appraisers protest use of in-house appraisers by insurers: The Association of Insurance Appraisers petitioned the Supreme Court against the Supervisor of Insurance and insurers. The Association claims the insurance firms' use of "in-house" appraisers creates a conflict of interest that is harmful to the public. The group asked the Court to prevent insurance firms appointing their own appraisers and to demand the Supervisor of Insurance take measures to protect the objectivity of all appraisers. *Galit Lipkis Beck*

Credit Management Institute begins conference: The annual Israel Credit Management Institute conference takes place at the Manufacturers Association headquarters today. The organization is a member of the European Federation of Credit Management. *David Harris*

US new-home sales slip in September: Sales of new homes edged lower in September, the Commerce Department said yesterday. Sales of new homes slipped 0.5 percent in September. *Reuters*

UK interest rates raised for first time in 20 months

LONDON (Reuters) - British Finance Minister Kenneth Clarke ordered a shock increase in official interest rates yesterday, confounding financial markets that had predicted he would not risk such a bold move ahead of a general election.

At his monthly monetary meeting with Bank of England Governor Eddie George, Clarke, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, authorized an immediate rise in interest rates to 6.0 percent from 5.75%.

The central bank had been pressing since June for a tightening in monetary policy, arguing that rising economic growth meant there was a risk of a resurgence in inflation within the next two years.

Clarke, conscious that higher rates could undermine the popularity of the already embattled Conservative government by making home loans more expensive for millions of home-owners, resisted the bank's advice for several months.

But yesterday he agreed to raise rates for the first time since February 1995, saying he was determined to take no risks with inflation.

"The economy is performing exceptionally well," Clarke said. "However, the strength of activity indicates that a rise in rates is

desirable if we are to deliver our inflation target of 2.5% or less in the medium term. Experience has shown that by increasing rates early, as I did in 1994 and I am doing today, possible inflation can be nipped in the bud."

Welcoming the decision, George said: "Moving now to moderate the accelerating pace of the economic upswing is likely to mean that we will need to tighten policy by less than we would otherwise."

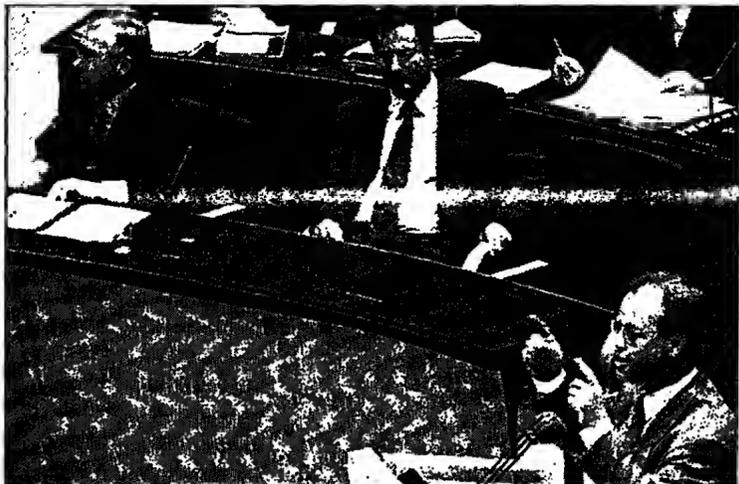
Underlying annual inflation has stuck stubbornly above the government's 2.5% target. It was 2.9% in September.

London financial markets, which had seen Clarke cut interest rates four times since last December, were caught off guard by the increase.

The pound surged to a 22-month high against the mark and a 19-month high against the dollar, while share prices and government bonds fell back.

Commercial banks raised their own base lending rates, but major mortgage lenders said they had no immediate plans to increase the cost of home loans.

Economists said that although Clarke might be perceived to have caved in to pressure from the Bank of England, the rate rise would probably enhance his reputation as a prudent finance minister.



Social Democratic parliamentary leader Rudolf Scharping (right) is flanked by German Finance Minister Theo Waigel (left) and Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel as he addresses an emergency debate in parliament on Waigel's budget policy. (Reuters)

IDB, Clal face changes after Wainshal resigns

GALIT LIPKIS BECK

CLAL and IDB face major personnel, structural and strategic changes, following Clal Chief Executive David Wainshal's surprise announcement Tuesday that he would leave the conglomerate by March at the latest, after five and half years at the helm of Israel's second largest holding company, capital-market sources said yesterday.

The Globes financial daily yesterday reported IDB is contemplating a merger of much of the activities of Discount Investments and Clal.

Sources close to Clal say there are very few candidates within the company suitable for Wainshal's position. IDB's majority shareholder, the Recanati family, is expected to appoint an external

manager, probably someone already close to the family.

Clal Chairman Avi Olshansky is also expected to resign soon or risk being forced to step down, following IDB's recent purchase of Bank Hapoalim's surplus holdings in Clal Israel. A leading contender to take over from Olshansky is Udi Recanati, son of Raphael Recanati, the chairman of IDB.

IDB's recent purchase of a stake in Clal increased its total holdings there to 42.7 percent, turning it into a major shareholder and giving it the right to have the final say in the appointment of its chairman. Sources close to the Recanati fam-

ily say Olshansky will remain in his position for the next few months to prevent major jobs to the company.

Following Wainshal's announcement, IDB co-managing director Elyahu Cohen said his company has "total confidence" in Wainshal and regrets his decision to resign.

However, sources close to the Recanatis said the family was unsatisfied with Clal's performance during the last few years. Among the things that upset the Recanatis are Suntrust's continued losses, the failure to invest in Elite, the purchase of the problematic Hyperstok, and losses in Kitan and Sciex, which despite a series of efficiency measures has not yet returned to profitability.

Czechs mull creation of Eastern Europe's biggest bank

PRAGUE (Reuters) - The Czech National Bank (CNB) has proposed merging savings bank Ceska Sporitelna with foreign trade bank Ceskoslovenska Obchodni Banka (CSOB), and then privatizing the new bank, which would be the largest in post-Communist Eastern Europe.

CNB spokesman Martin Svehla said the proposal was part of a wide-ranging plan to privatize major stakes in the "Big Four" Czech banks that had been submitted to the cabinet to prepare the banks for stiffer foreign competition.

"Continuing with the privatization of these banks has the aim of increasing the competitiveness of banks, to fit them more towards (entry into) the European Union and to increase their performance," Svehla said.

The CNB, however, proposed holding off on privatization of the new combined Sporitelna and CSOB for three to five years, until the effects of the merger were analyzed.

Analysts said the new bank, based on 1995 results, would have combined assets of roughly 540 billion crowns (NIS 65b.), making it by far the largest bank in Eastern Europe and over twice the size of the next largest bank, Komerční Banka.

It is not clear when the cabinet will debate the CNB proposals, but a senior central bank official said it might be on the agenda of next Wednesday's government meeting.

Jack Schrantz, equities analyst at Creditanstalt Prague, said the merger would bring economies of scale from necessary cuts in Sporitelna's and CSOB's bloated workforces.

"There's got to be a lot of overlap. In many of these departments you would see big staffing cuts," he said.

The CNB plan calls first for quick privatization of the state's 31.5 percent in Investiční a Postovní Banka (IPB), a suggestion endorsed by the Finance Ministry earlier this month.

Postal Authority launches Romanian money-transfers

JUDY SIEGEL

SHEKELS sent to Romanian relatives and friends turn within minutes into dollars in Bucharest under a new Postal Authority arrangement announced yesterday.

Authority director-general Moshe Tery said that due to many requests by Israelis seeking to transfer money to Romania, the new service was introduced via Western Union.

The money can be wired to the Banca Romaneasca in Bucharest only, but the arrangement will gradually be expanded to other locations as well. Money may be sent from Postal Banks in 250 local post offices, Tery said. There's no need to have an account at a Postal Bank to make the transfer.

Postal Bank services director Baruch Tepper said the Bucharest bank is open Sundays through Fridays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. As a result of a similar Western Union arrangement for sending money to the former Soviet Union, which was launched in September, such transfers have increased by 40%.

Additional information about the new service is available from the toll-free number 177-022-2131, the Postal Bank's e-mail site, info@postalbank.co.il or its Web site at http://www.postalbank.co.il.

Plunging rand brings calls for S. Africa to turn to IMF

JOHANNESBURG (Reuters) - There were mounting calls for South Africa to seek International Monetary Fund assistance yesterday as the rand plunged to record lows against the dollar and the British pound.

Economists and opposition politicians said Finance Minister Trevor Manuel had little choice but to seek IMF help, despite vociferous opposition from some left-wing members of the ruling African National Congress.

"Dr Stals (the Reserve Bank governor) and the minister of finance should at least start filling in the forms," said National Party spokesman Theo Alant.

"It is a serious situation and I think they should be looking at the option of an IMF facility. It would

send a political signal to the players in the market...that we intend to support the rand."

The battle-scarred currency sank more than five cents to 4.74 against the dollar and to 7.72 against a rampant British pound as speculators sold rands short and importers scrambled to secure cover to pay for essential goods.

The rand has now lost 30 percent versus the dollar since February.

Intervention by the Reserve Bank failed to stop the slide with currency traders scornful of the country's low reserves.

Economists estimated that foreign reserves, which stood at 10 billion rand (NIS 6.8b.) at the end of September, had probably shrunk by 1b. rand on the latest bout of intervention.

"The situation is plain desperate," said Hania Farhan of ING Barings in Johannesburg, urging the government to turn to the IMF.

Under IMF rules, South Africa would be able to draw up to 100 percent of its IMF quota - some \$2 billion - for use as a standby or extended fund facility.

Farhan said such a cash injection would boost reserves and reassure the markets that South Africa could fund its current account deficit, thus allowing the lifting of exchange controls on residents which remain a key cause of market uncertainty.

The view was echoed by a fund manager at BOE Asset Management which said an IMF package was a "sensible" option.

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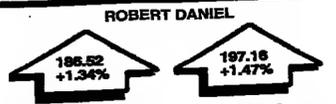
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הגדלה של האלמנט

Stocks gain as shekel falls against dollar

TEL AVIV STOCK MARKET



Two-Sided Index

STOCKS advanced as the shekel weakened against the US dollar yesterday, potentially lifting profits at export companies. The shekel traded between 3.26 and 3.27 compared to 3.256 Tuesday, said Ephraim Steinbruch, an analyst at Ofek Securities. 'It's not much, but the trend is good, especially for the main exporters,' Steinbruch said. 'The market appreciates it.' The Maof Index climbed 1.47 percent to 197.16, while the Mishtamim Index advanced 1.34% to 186.52. The most active issue was Teva Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd., which advanced 1.25 on NIS 3.4 million of shares traded. Teva's American depository receipts closed unchanged at 39 1/2 Tuesday after trading up as much as 1 3/4. The US Food and Drug Administration cleared Teva's...

Europe shares fall after surprise UK rate hike

WORLD MARKET ROUNDUP

LONDON - Leading UK shares finished sharply lower yesterday after an interest rate rise wrong-footed the market, which had predicted no change in rates ahead of a general election. The FTSE 100 closed down 29.6 points at 3,963.9, falling through key chart support levels on the way. FRANKFURT - German shares ended bourse trade slightly higher, but at the day's low point, after the dollar slipped and German bonds 'lost' some sheen following the surprise raising of the UK interest rate. The all-share Swiss Performance Index fell 4.49 points, or 0.19%, to close at 3,391.32. TOKYO - Tokyo stocks finished sharply lower, battered psychologically by news that a regional bank had said it suspects a former employee misused bank funds, brokers said. Futures-linked selling also depressed the market, they said. The key Nikkei 225 average tumbled 276.41 points to 20,681.67.

Blue-chips fall on fears about slowing economy

WALL STREET REPORT

NEW YORK (AP) - Stocks turned mostly lower yesterday after signs of continued strength in home sales dampened enthusiasm for an earlier report that reinforced an outlook for tame inflation and steady interest rates. On Wall Street, the Dow Jones industrial average dropped 13.79 points to close at 5,993.23, after retreating from an early 21-point advance, dipping back below 6,000. The Nasdaq market posted modest gains as investors looked for bargains after several days of profit-taking in leading technology shares. Advancing issues barely outnumbered decliners on the New York Stock Exchange, with 1,201 up, 1,185 down and 822 unchanged. NYSE volume totaled 437.78 million shares, vs. 441.08 million in the previous session. NYSE volume totaled 437.78 million shares, vs. 441.08 million in the previous session.

CURRENCY CROSS-RATES

Table with columns: R, MARK, STERLING, YEN, SFR, FFY. Rows include DOLLAR, SWISS FRANC, POUND, etc.

TUG-OF-WAR

(Continued from Page 1) scores. What we saw was yet another example of the political survival of the fittest. It takes an extraordinarily powerful finance minister to withstand sectorial pressure and even the most powerful finance ministers have never been able to resist such pressures completely. Meridor, so far, has not given the impression of being particularly powerful. He does not run the ruling party's political machine and does not possess another important prerequisite: maintaining support from the prime minister. Netanyahu, at this point, cannot afford to alienate too many components of his government, least of all Levy, whose tactics are shamelessly aggressive. On the eve of a wrenching redeployment in Hebron, Netanyahu must unify as much of his coalition around him as he can. Meridor threatens him least at this juncture. Meridor himself will be able to suffer a setback right now, realizing that he still has two months until the final reading of the budget bill to see Netanyahu away. Meridor can hope that Netanyahu was just choosing to give Levy's ego another massage and that nothing too substantial will be sacrificed in the end. So how the contest between Meridor and Levy will really turn out will not be decided until year's end.

TEL AVIV STOCKS

Large table of stock prices and changes for various companies like Bank Leumi, Bank Hapoalim, etc.

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INTERNATIONAL STOCK PRICES

Table of international stock prices for various countries like New York, London, Frankfurt, etc.

Key Representative Rates

Table with columns: U.S. Dollar, Sterling, German mark and their respective rates.

INTL STOCK MARKETS

New York market indexes

Table of New York market indexes like DJ Industrial, NYSE Comp, etc.

Other stock market indexes

Table of other stock market indexes like FTSE 100, Nikkei, etc.

Israeli stocks in US

Table of Israeli stocks in US like AMEX, NASDAQ, etc.

Libor rates

Table of Libor rates for various terms like 3 months, 6 months, etc.

Foreign financial data courtesy of

CommStock Trading Ltd. 34 Ben Yehuda St. Jerusalem, Tel. 02-244963, 03-575826

INTL COMMODITIES AND METALS

Table of international commodities and metals prices.

US commodities

Table of US commodity prices like Corn, Soybean, etc.

London commodities

Table of London commodity prices like Oil, Gold, etc.

Spot market metals (US)

Table of spot market metals prices like Gold, Silver, etc.

New York metal futures

Table of New York metal futures prices like Copper, Aluminum, etc.

London metal futures

Table of London metal futures prices like Gold, Silver, etc.

Month to percentage change

Table showing month-to-month percentage changes for various commodities.

Month to percentage change

Table showing month-to-month percentage changes for various metals.

Month to percentage change

Table showing month-to-month percentage changes for various metals.

Month to percentage change

Table showing month-to-month percentage changes for various metals.

Month to percentage change

Table showing month-to-month percentage changes for various metals.

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Weizman praises Syrian FM for 'cooling the atmosphere'

PRESIDENT Ezer Weizman yesterday praised remarks by Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Shara, who said his country was not planning to go to war with Israel.

Cooling the atmosphere is important, the president said. "It is not good to wave the swords of war daily. I am glad the Syrian foreign minister made his remarks," he said.

Weizman said that the Syrians had a sizable air force, ground forces and armored corps as well as anti-aircraft power, and threats on their part should be taken seriously.

"We are marching towards an era of peace," he said, "but we are not yet there." Weizman was speaking to disadvantaged youngsters from the North, who have volunteered to join a pre-army group which pre-

BATSHEVA TSUR

pare them for service.

He said that he was planning to meet with King Hussein in Jordan next Wednesday. The trip was supposed to have taken place some two weeks ago but was postponed because of the tensions with the Palestinians.

Despite "ups and downs" with Egypt, the president said relations were generally good. He revealed that his adjutant, Brig-Gen. Shimon Hefetz, had left Tuesday evening for Cairo to finalize details of the renewed search for Israeli MIAs. Close to 20 Israelis that went missing on the Egyptian front during the Yom Kippur War have

not been found, though Israel has details of the sites where many of them disappeared.

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak promised to permit the search to continue when Weizman met with him in Cairo on October 14. "There are wars on the battlefields and there are other wars - those against drugs and crime, the struggle for daily existence," said Aharon, one of the counsellors who accompanied the youth to Beit Hanassi. The youngsters in the group were from troubled backgrounds, he said, and many had dropped out of high school. The training program will provide them

with the opportunity to serve in the IDF, which they would out otherwise be able to do.

"We would like to be the generation of peace," Danit, who spoke on behalf of the youngsters, told Weizman. "But if we are not, we will do our bit for the country."

Weizman was asked by one of the participants what could be done to make Israelis "more Jewish."

"It is true that the Zionist movement was founded basically as a secular movement," Weizman said. "But I think that guarding Israel is one of the mitzvot... I would rather have a secular Jew living in Israel and doing his duty for his country than haredi Jews living in New York."

PM on Syria, Page 2

WEATHER

Forecast: Partly cloudy to clear with a rise in temperatures.

AROUND THE WORLD

	LOW	HIGH	WIND	SEA	CLD
Amsterdam	07	10	10	10	cloudy
Berlin	08	11	10	10	cloudy
Buenos Aires	17	21	20	20	clear
Chicago	19	21	20	20	cloudy
Cairo	20	28	17	17	clear
Copenhagen	06	08	11	11	cloudy
Frankfurt	07	10	10	10	cloudy
Geneva	07	10	10	10	cloudy
Helsinki	11	12	13	13	clear
London	07	10	10	10	cloudy
Los Angeles	08	15	19	19	clear
Madrid	08	15	19	19	clear
Moscow	05	08	10	10	cloudy
New York	07	10	10	10	cloudy
Paris	07	10	10	10	cloudy
Rome	08	15	19	19	clear
Stockholm	08	11	11	11	cloudy
Tel Aviv	18	25	15	15	clear
Toronto	07	10	10	10	cloudy
Yokohama	08	11	11	11	cloudy
Zurich	08	11	11	11	cloudy



Prof. Jan Karski, who brought word of the Holocaust to the West, speaks at Yad Vashem yesterday.

Righteous Gentile: Ignore the Holocaust deniers

BATSHEVA TSUR

"THE voices denying the Holocaust should be ignored," Prof. Jan Karski, a Righteous Gentile of Polish origin and an honorary citizen of Israel, declared last night.

"Their names and articles should not be mentioned. They are marginal and we can't change them. I consider them ignoramuses of ill-will," Karski told an audience at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. "I cannot have a discussion with cockroaches, and they are human cockroaches."

In 1942, Karski was sent by the Polish underground to London, where he met with the country's leaders, including Winston Churchill, MPs, and the press. "To all of them, he presented the Jewish case in a unique fashion," Yad Vashem's Prof. Yisrael Gutman said.

Later he travelled to the US, met with then president Franklin Roosevelt and with Jewish leaders - and pressed the Jewish case again. He travelled throughout the country speaking in synagogues and churches and urging action. But he was unable to muster the support he sought.

Before leaving Poland, Karski had entered the Warsaw Ghetto to get first-hand impressions. In his book, *The Secret State*, published in 1944, Karski wrote of his meetings with Polish Jewish leaders and "the complete hopelessness of their predicament. There was no escape for them. There could be no hope for victory."

In 1982, Karski - today a profes-

Winning cards

THE winning cards in yesterday's Mifal Hapayis daily chance draw were the nine of spades, king of hearts, queen of diamonds, and ace of clubs.

30 kilos of marijuana seized

POLICE yesterday seized 30 kg. of marijuana after a chase, involving trackers and a helicopter, that ended north of Mitzpe Ramon.

Traffic policemen Yossi Hajaj and Moti Gabai were patrolling the Beersheba-Mitzpe Ramon road after midnight Tuesday night, when they saw a man hand a large sack to another alongside the road near the Nafta Prison.

This aroused their suspicion and they started to pursue the pair. They succeeded in capturing one, a 29-year-old Beduin; the other escaped.

The policemen then called for reinforcements. A police helicopter lit the area with its searchlight and trackers were brought in, but the second man was not found.

Police found 30 kg. of marijuana inside the sack, which was inside the van belonging to the captured suspect. (Itim)

MKs divided on easing gun-licensing rules

LIAT COLLINS

THE Knesset Interior Committee intends to hold an urgent session with Interior Minister Eliahu Suissa to examine the new, easier criteria for obtaining a gun license.

Committee chairman Sallah Tarif (Labor) said he supports removing the strict restrictions that had been placed on gun licenses after the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin.

"Not every IDF officer or combat unit veteran should be considered a potential criminal, and there is no reason to take away a citizen's basic right of to defend himself if he has no criminal record," Tarif said.

The decision to make guns more readily available was not well received by many MKs, how-

ever

Women MKs, including Yael Dayan (Labor), Dalia Itzik (Labor), and Naomi Chazan (Meretz) condemned the new criteria, saying they would increase the potential for wife-killing. Chazan called them "a license to kill," while Itzik called on Suissa to reconsider the decision. In a letter to the minister, she wrote: "I'm surprised that your vision for the State of Israel is that of a state with a gun for every worker."

She said it was "absurd" that the committee that examined licensing laws following the killing of four women by a man who held a valid license should reach the conclusion that obtain-

ing a license should be made easier.

MKs Eli Ben-Menahem, Elie Goldschmidt (both Labor), and Silvan Shalom (Likud) also signed Itzik's letter. Haggai Merom (Labor) demanded a special Knesset meeting on the subject, saying the decision goes against the trend in the rest of the world to tighten such laws. Labor faction chairman Ra'anan Cohen described the decision "scandalous."

Molodet leader Rehavem Ze'evi and Tsomet faction chairman Eliezer Zandberg, on the other hand, favored the change. Ze'evi said every citizen has a right to protect himself and his family, while Zandberg said he supports the new regulations in principle.

Arming civilians a calculated risk

COMMENT

BILL HUTMAN

ARMED civilians are good for security, the country's security establishment has long held. The question today is whether Interior Minister Eli Suissa has taken this view too far, by deciding on Tuesday to ease the restrictions on obtaining gun licenses.

The apparently well-intentioned Suissa could perhaps learn something from the last person who got himself into trouble by going overboard in a call to arms - former police inspector-general Ya'acov Termer.

During a wave of terror attacks in early 1993, Termer called on all civilians with gun licenses to begin carrying their weapons, to help the security forces in fighting terrorists. He was heavily criticized for this, though he was not saying anything new. The security establishment has long maintained that civilians must play a central

role in the war on terror.

Security officials offer a list of attacks that were halted by the quick response of armed civilians, to back up their position that it is important for civilians to carry weapons.

So while Termer was charged with "turning Israel into the Wild West," his call really reflected the opposite: in the modern West - New York, or Washington, for example - more civilians with weapons means more violent crime. But here, citizens are trusted to use weapons responsibly.

But the fears expressed by the criticism of Termer three years ago, and Suissa this week, are not totally baseless. Many believe that both forgot that for all that armed

those persons already holding licenses not to leave their weapons at home, but to carry them with them," Termer said.

In a joint statement yesterday, the Interior Security Ministry and police spokesmen reiterated the long-standing view of the security establishment.

"We agree in principle with the effort by the Interior Ministry to ease certain criteria for getting a gun license, and correct the problems that existed, particularly for army personnel to receive licenses [for personal weapons]," the spokesmen said.

They added that they had yet to receive a copy of Suissa's decision, but still "have no doubt that in the future the criteria that ensured that guns would only be in qualified and responsible hands will remain in effect." One can only hope so.

Film school establishes \$100,000 annual prize

HELEN KAYE

THE Sam Spiegel School of Film and Television has announced the establishment of the \$100,000 Sam Spiegel Jerusalem Foundation Prize.

The prize, to be awarded annually for the next five years, will be awarded for the best feature-length screenplay by an SFT graduate and is designed to cover most of the production costs of the winning film.

SFT principal, filmmaker Renan Shor, further revealed that the school received the Outstanding Film School award at the recent Lodz International Student Film Festival in Poland. This is the fourth time this year that the school has received such an accolade.

An SFT film by graduate Ra'anan Alexandrovitz (*Every Once in a While*) won Best Film. New York's Museum of Modern Art is to run a retrospective of 11 outstanding films by SFT graduates from November 9-12. The gala opening will be attended by New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, Jerusalem Foundation president Ruth Heshin and former

Jerusalem mayor Teddy Kollek, among others.

The Jerusalem Foundation, which established SFT, said that the prize was made possible because the late producer willed the royalties of his films to the Foundation.

Spiegel died 20 years ago and is best remembered for classics such as *The African Queen* and *On the Waterfront*.

Spiegel died 20 years ago and is best remembered for classics such as *The African Queen* and *On the Waterfront*.

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Ivry leaves Defense, says military will need more money

STEVE RODAN

DEFENSE Ministry Director-General David Ivry steps down from his post today after more than 10 years, saying that the military will need more money to prepare for the possibility of war with Syria.

"Nobody says that there will be war," Ivry said yesterday at a news conference. "But the assessment of the situation has changed in the last two to three months."

Ivry said Israel and Syria want to avoid war, stressing that neither side can afford to mistread the other's intentions.

"We have to be careful [to avoid] misunderstanding," he said.

The defense official acknowledged that military supplies, including ammunition, have reached insufficient levels for war. He said the decision was taken several years ago, during IDF assessments of a low probability for war, to divert the funds to research and development projects.

"This can be changed," he said. "The military has to adapt itself to the changing situation."

Ivry, who served in the post longer than anybody in Israeli history, will be replaced today by former OC Central Command Maj-Gen. (res.) Ilan Biran. Ivry praised his successor, saying, "He's a man with a lot of knowledge in military and logistics. I think the position of director-general is so wide that he'll find lots of room for initiative."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Turn your headlights on
Starting tomorrow, all drivers must have their headlights lit throughout the day on interurban highways, the Road Safety Authority reminded motorists yesterday. A law requires headlights to be on at all times between November 1 and March 31. Buses, taxis, motorcycles and trucks over 15 tons must have their lights lit within cities as well.

According to authority director Shalom Ben-Moshe, the lighting of headlights does not affect a vehicle's electric system, battery or starter, but it does make it easier for pedestrians, especially children and the elderly, to see oncoming vehicles. *Haim Shapiro*

Body found in Ashdod
The body of a man in his forties was found early yesterday morning on Rehov Rogozin, Ashdod's main street. Two city residents on their way to work discovered the body, which had been thrown on the sidewalk. Police said the man may have been a foreign worker. The body was taken to the Institute of Forensic Medicine at Abu Kabir. *Itim*

הלגה מן אלטל